

What is the Montana Department of Corrections (MDOC) Victim-Offender Dialogue Program?

Victim Offender Dialogue through MDOC is a program in which the victim of a felony crime and the adult offender who committed the crime meet with a facilitator (sometimes called a mediator) to discuss the crime. The focus is on the harm done to the victim and the offender's responsibility.

Why might a victim want to meet with the offender?

Victims often have questions only offenders can answer. What actually happened before and during the crime? What were my loved one's last words? Why did you pick me? What did you do with our belongings that you stole?

Victims may want to tell the offender their story -- how their lives have been affected by the crime and how they feel about what happened.

Victims often want to know about life inside the prison, what kind of person the offender is, and whether he or she is sorry.

Why might an offender want to meet with the victim?

Some offenders want an opportunity to apologize to the victims, to express remorse for the crimes they committed.

Answering the victim's questions and providing details about the crime is one way the offender can attempt to make amends.

Who can participate in Victim-Offender Dialogue?

Victims of adult felony offenders in MDOC facilities or programs are invited to request Victim-Offender Dialogue by calling the Victim Information Specialist at (888) 223-6332. A victim might also ask a family member, counselor, local victim advocate or other trusted person to make the initial call to MDOC.

Offenders are not allowed to initiate a Victim-Offender Dialogue under the MDOC Program. An offender may choose to participate or not participate after the victim requests it. Offenders receive no tangible benefits for participating.

How does the Victim-Offender Dialogue process work?

Preparation for the actual Victim-Offender Dialogue will take several months because careful planning is so important. The process is not for everyone, so each case is carefully reviewed by MDOC and the facilitator.

MDOC will not allow Victim-Offender Dialogue in cases involving domestic violence or stalking. Crimes against children may be mediated with the victim's parent or legal guardian. Minors may not participate directly.

Each case is assigned to one or two trained facilitators who will meet separately with the victim and the offender to prepare for the Dialogue. Both parties are encouraged to have a support person with them throughout the process.

MDOC determines if a case is appropriate for Victim-Offender Dialogue.



MDOC'S MISSION...

The Department of Corrections is dedicated to public safety and trust by holding adult and juvenile offenders accountable for their actions against victims through custody, supervision, treatment, work, restitution and skill development.

Montana Department of Corrections
Victim Information Specialist
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Victims speak out...

A man who was left for dead during a convenience store armed robbery could not seem to get over his fear that the offender would get out of prison and come after him for testifying at the trial. Victim-Offender Dialogue helped him see that the robber would not hurt him again. "It felt good to hear that the offender was sorry."

So angry was the mother of a child killed by a drunk driver that she was scarcely able to function. "I couldn't begin to heal until I let go of my hatred. After the mediation, I felt more at peace with myself and the world."

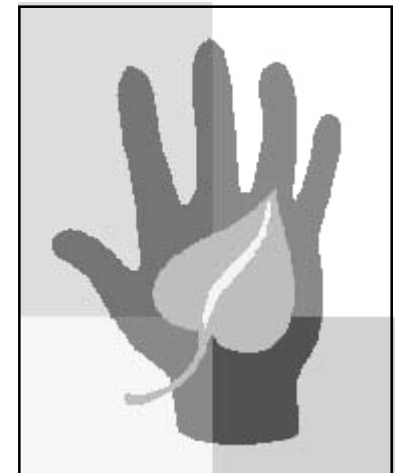
A woman spent 25 years in fear of the man who raped her. When she met him face-to-face, she saw that he was an old man dying of cancer. "Once I knew he would not come back to rape me again, I was able to begin the healing process."

--- Typical experiences with
Victim-Offender Dialogue

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The Montana Department
of Corrections

Victim- Offender Dialogue Program



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